

CAREGIVER RESOURCES AND HEALTH COMMUNICATION TOOLS Sheila Seño

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Introduction

Adventist Health Simi Valley, a faith-based, integrated, and dedicated healthcare hospital, is part of a 20-hospital network of the Adventist Health group in the US [1]. The organization aims to provide positive healing experiences for people from diverse faiths, communities, and cultures. Simi Valley is located in Ventura County, which ranks in the lowest category of health outcomes (according to the 2021 County Health Rankings and Roadmaps initiative). As per state and federal law, the hospital undertakes a Community Health Needs Assessment every three years to determine community benefit plans and how to address community healthcare needs, including the Caregiver Support & Care Navigator Program (CSCNP), which assists caregivers with the overall care planning, treatment, and implementation of interventions for patients.

Caregiver Support and Care Navigation Program (CSCNP)

The CSCNP primarily helps caregivers and patients make effective clinical decisions, which creates informed, quality health care. It targets caregivers, especially those who support elderly patients who are seriously ill, disabled, or injured.



Figure 1: Service Map of Adventist Health Simi Valley

This program also supports at-risk patients, including sepsis, COPD, CHF, and pneumonia patients. Moreover, the CSCNP program is oriented towards empowering, equipping, and strengthening caregivers to meet the challenges of informal care, which include stress, depression, financial duress, and emotional exhaustion. The program also promotes assessment; staff services; community partner identification; care planning; referrals; education; integration into health systems; and program monitoring, learning, and evaluation.

Role of Caregiver Literacy and Resources in the Caregiver Program for DRGs (Sepsis, COPD, CHF, and Pneumonia)

Health communication informs and influences decisions and actions to improve health. Healthcare professionals can use effective communication strategies to educate the public about the importance of getting flu vaccines, encourage women to get mammograms, raise awareness about stigmatized topics like mental health, and properly care for patients at home. Disseminating health information requires a critical understanding of the elements of care for a patient. For example, caregivers caring for a sepsis patient at home can achieve health literacy through hospital's websites, infographics, brochures, YouTube videos, and educational materials. Using straightforward vocabulary is crucial to communicating effectively with the general public. For this project, I developed clear, comprehensible resource materials for sepsis caregivers. My end goal is to make these resources reproducible for other DRG use that AHSV uses for their caregivers' resources.



Figure 2: Caregiver Support and Care Navigation Program Components

Project Overview

1. Gathered and assessed existing reports of AHSV's Caregiver Support and Care Navigation Program (CSCNP).
2. Attended CSCNP collaborative meetings to learn the program's organizational structure, care team services, and care planning.
3. Researched diagnosis-related groups (DRGs) with the highest rates of admission for AHSV. This includes vulnerable patients re-admitted for sepsis care (which is the most common condition), followed by patients with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), congestive heart failure (CHF), and pneumonia.
4. Developed health communication tools that will allow AHSV to strengthen their CSCNP program intervention and support, boost their online presence, and build on their public health messaging systems.

Policy Recommendation

I would recommend that federal and state governments enact legislation that will upgrade the training requirements of caregivers, especially those working in the formal healthcare setting. Currently, caregivers or nursing assistants only require a high school diploma and 75 hours of training for them to start working. This training is inadequate to prepare them for the responsibilities they are supposed to perform in the healthcare system. New policies propose that new caregivers take between 18 to 24 months of formal training. This proposed training will be tailored to caregivers' educational levels. My fellowship assessment targeted its educational tools towards a 5th-grade level of literacy. Hence, trainers must train caregivers in accordance with their educational level to enable them to acquire the required skills. The proposed law can require healthcare colleges to develop appropriate course content that will meet the skill needs of the caregivers. The proposal for advanced training for caregivers may also require the federal government to increase caregivers' annual remuneration in order to match their work and education levels.

Figures 3&4 : Website Prototype and Infographic



References

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Conclusion

Through the Randall Lewis Health Policy fellowship, my work enabled me to research the role of caregivers who served patients with sepsis, COPD, CHF, and pneumonia. Caregivers act as links between patients and healthcare systems, especially after hospital discharge [2]. It is not easy for them to cope with the emotional, physical, social, and financial challenges associated with caring for chronically ill patients [6]. Thus, they require a broad range of resources to enable them to perform their duties effectively. These resources include communication tools, knowledge, technical support, and encouragement, among others [3]. By equipping them with the necessary tools and skills, caregivers can successfully face the numerous challenges in their work [4,5]. Additionally, given the acute crisis facing healthcare organizations in present times, integrating health communication tools into their program allows AHSV to bolster the support they provide to caregivers.

By and large, we are discharging patients into the care of family members...if they are not trained, aware, and educated, patients are likely to end up back in the hospital."

-University of Pittsburgh Medical Center Researchers

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